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the Episcopate and of the Sovereign Pontificate." The triumph of Modernism would assuredly spell the doom of the "Sovereign Pontificate," for it would give authority to "the agreement of individual minds."

It is doubtful if the methods taken for the suppression of Modernism have succeeded even in seriously hampering its propaganda. Recent events are calculated to revive radical tendencies in

the church and to bring about a state of mind in which Modernist views will be considered more favorably than was to be expected ten years ago. The Encyclical *Pascendi* deplors the influence of the movement upon the young; to which Tyrrell replies: "If the young are with us we have only to wait. A generation more and the whole world will be with us" (*Mediaevalism*, p. 120).

HUMOR IN THE BIBLE

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People do not go to the Bible for amusement. It is not a book of jokes. Very likely many have been so impressed with its gravity that they have gone over its pages without discovering anything in it which savors of wit. It is such a serious book, and is regarded with such reverence, that doubtless some will be shocked by the assertion that it has in it occasional gleams of humor. That, however, is the fact, and does not at all lower its ethical standard. Containing as it does such a great variety of writings, and being a divine-human book, it was inevitable that some of its pages should be lightened by wit. This should not be surprising inasmuch as the faculty of humor is God-given. It is often used against him, but can be employed for his honor and his kingdom. Henry Ward Beecher defended the use of it in the pulpit by saying that wit is the keenest weapon known; and why

should it not be employed for God instead of only for the devil? Jesus himself indulged in wit and irony, as will be later shown, to the confusion of his foes and the delight of his friends.

A most enjoyable bit of irony is to be found in Judges 9:7-21. Abimelech, son of Jerubbaal, slew all of his brethren except Jotham, the youngest, who escaped by hiding. On the day that Abimelech was made king, Jotham stood on the top of Mount Gerizim, where he told this parable to the men of Shechem at its foot: The trees sought for a king to reign over them. They successively invited the olive tree, the fig tree, and the vine, but each declined because it was usefully engaged in fruit-bearing, and did not care for the empty honor of waving to and fro over the trees. At last they turned to the bramble—and it consented!

The men of Shechem needed no interpretation of that fable. Abimelech was the bramble, and the bramble was a fruitless, prickly, worthless, detestable thing. After telling that story, no wonder that Jotham ran for his life! It was a shaft that went straight to the mark, and was so appreciated that it never was forgotten, and eventually was incorporated in the national history. Doubtless it caused Abimelech to be known all his life as "the Bramble."

Elijah in his contest with the priests of Baal (I Kings 18:22-40) has given us an example of the keenest kind of irony. It is in his taunting them with their failure to secure from Baal an answer to their appeals to send down fire to burn their sacrifice. He had challenged them to make such a test, the deity who answered by fire to be declared God. The first opportunity was given to the priests of Baal, and they had called unavailingly upon that god from morning until noon. Up to that time Elijah had left them undisturbed. "And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud; for he is a god: either he is musing, or he is gone aside, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked."

Notice the stinging nature of each gibe: "Cry aloud"—they had been doing that for six long hours. "For he is a god"—according to their claim, and therefore had the power to do as they asked. "He is musing"—so absorbed in meditation as to be oblivious of everything. "He is gone aside"—hence your appeal is inopportune. "He is on a journey"—gone beyond the reach of your cries. "Peradventure

he sleepeth, and must be awaked"—as though he were a mere man.

While this mordant sarcasm was calculated to arouse the priests of Baal to frenzy, as it did, so that they cried aloud more passionately still, it was meant especially to beget in the Jews a deep scorn of Baal as an impotent god. Upon those who heard this withering irony, Baal could have no further hold.

One of the most serious books of the Bible is that of Job. It portrays the gloom and despair of a man overwhelmed by affliction. Suffering physically, and more mentally, he needed to receive sympathy from his friends. Instead, they irritated him by persistently asserting that he must have deeply sinned in order to be so greatly punished. Indignant at their pertinacious attempts to convict him of guilt, he calls them "miserable comforters," "physicians of no value," "forgers of lies." They arrogated to themselves such superiority in discernment and understanding that he retorted in this bit of cutting satire:

No doubt ye are the people,
And wisdom shall die with you.

—Job 12:3.

The caustic quality of this remark has tickled all the ages since, and has often been used to prick overweening conceit.

In the course of their debate Job accuses his friends of speaking unrighteously and deceitfully for God in endeavoring to uphold the orthodox doctrine of that day that all severe affliction was retributive and hence deserved (13:7-12). Note the humor in the idea, that they could defend it

only by justifying it wrongfully and consciously falsely as God's method of showing his wrath. Observe also the irony of the questions, "Will ye show partiality to him? Will ye contend for God?"—as if he desired a one-sided, quibbling justification of his dealings with men, or needed any to defend him. Trenchantly he continues: "He will surely reprove you, if ye do secretly show partiality"—even when it is exhibited for himself! They were doing this against their own inner convictions, and Job is telling them that in doing that they were not earning God's approval, as they thought, but his rebuke by speaking untruths or misapplying actual truths, however piously they uttered them. Let everyone learn from this that God is intolerant of any uncandid argument, even when used to uphold the most orthodox doctrine.

The Book of Proverbs now and then enforces a wise saying by putting it in a humorous way. To the injunction not to withhold correction from the child, it is dryly added, "For if thou beat him with the rod he will not die" (23:14)—no matter how hard he may yell! A wrangling woman is twice characterized in this eminently satisfactory way: "It is better to dwell in the corner of a housetop than with a contentious woman in a wide house" (21:9; 25:24). Speaker's *Commentary* wittily interprets this as meaning that a man had better endure all the winds, rains, and storms on the unprotected housetop than be subjected to the unceasing tempest of a brawling woman within. The emphasis, however, seems to be laid upon the small, restricted chamber in the corner of the housetop

as against the "wide" rooms below. It is better to live alone in such an inconvenient place, where one can have peace, than to dwell in the commodious house itself with a bickering woman, for, however wide the house, there is no escape from her! The proverbialist goes farther and says: "It is better to dwell in a desert land," which is voiceless and lonely, "than with a contentious and fretful woman" (21:19). He likens a contentious woman to "a continual dropping in a very rainy day" (27:15), and declares that "the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping" (19:13). All of which suggests that henpecked husbands might do well to recommend to their wives the careful reading of the Book of Proverbs!

To the writer of the Book of Proverbs the sluggard is no more esteemed than the contentious woman. He transfixes him also with the arrows of his wit. He characterizes him as "wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason" (26:16). He thus takes off the way that he clings to his bed: "As the door turneth upon its hinges"—without leaving them—"so doth the sluggard [turn] upon his bed"—without leaving it! His indolence is so great that he will declare that there is a lion in the streets (22:13; 26:13), to justify himself for staying idle in the house. He is represented as not liking to exert himself even in eating: "The sluggard burieth his hand in the dish, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again" (19:24); "The sluggard burieth his hand in the dish; it wearieth him to bring it again to his mouth" (26:15). This exaggeration of the slug-

gard's laziness humorously burlesques his disinclination to exertion even if it is to result in giving him pleasure.

Without attempting to exhaust all the examples of humor in the Old Testament, let us turn to the New and to the great Teacher himself for some instances of its use by him.

Jesus had caused a blind and dumb man both to see and speak. It was believed that his afflictions had been caused by a demon, and that they were removed by the casting out of the demon. The Pharisees sought to discredit Jesus by alleging that he cast out demons through Beelzebub, the prince of the demons. The Saviour made clear how ridiculous was such an assertion by showing that that would be dividing a kingdom against itself, and that would be self-destructive. After thus settling the matter by serious argument, he turned to the Pharisees with the discomfiting question, "And if I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out?" Could any thrust have been keener? For their "sons" were their disciples whom they were instructing in the process of exorcising demons!

Jesus had many a tilt with the Pharisees, and always to their worsting. As he was teaching in the temple they came to him with the questions, "By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?" (Matt. 21:23). By "these things" the questioners meant everything which Jesus had been doing—his teaching, working of miracles, cleansing of the temple, etc. They were seeking for a pretext to excommunicate him. If he should say that he was divinely author-

ized, they would denounce him as a presumptuous impostor; if he should admit that he had no warrant either from God or from the properly constituted ecclesiastical authorities, it would be very easy to dispose of him. The Pharisees thought that Jesus would be surely impaled on one of the horns of this dilemma. But mark how cleverly he put them at disadvantage with a counter-dilemma! He promised to answer their question if they would answer one that he should propound: "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or from men?" This simple query was embarrassing. The Pharisees had to consult among themselves before they made any reply at all. They saw that if they said, "From heaven," he would say, "Why then did ye not believe on him?" And they did not dare to say, "From men," because that would stir up the anger of the multitude, for all held John to be a prophet. So they dodged the issue, and meekly said, "We know not." That was hard for the Pharisees to say publicly. And they submissively received Jesus' answer, "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." In wit the Savior was more than a match for his foes.

There is a deft touch of humor in the parable of the Prodigal Son. It is where it is said that the wayward young man "came to himself"—the intimation being that in his sad fling he had been beside himself, and at last had discovered the fact. He was struck with the ridiculousness of the situation. He was starving when he might have plenty. He was living on husks when he might have loaves of bread. He had

been despising the stay-at-home son, pluming himself as being much more knowing, and now realized what a fool he had been. The parable emphasizes the insanity of all prodigal sons—they are beside themselves.

The narratives of the parables, *The Selfish Neighbor* (Luke 11:5-8) and *The Unjust Judge* (Luke 18:2-6), present some amusing circumstances. The first is a supposed case of one going to a friend's house at midnight and pleading for three loaves because of the coming of a friend from a long journey, and there is nothing to set before him. He is refused by the neighbor because the door is shut and he is in bed and his children with him. Mark Jesus' comment on this: "I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will arise and give him as many as he needeth." All that the man has to do to secure all that he wants is to keep pounding on the door!

In the second parable there is an unrighteous judge who feared not God nor regarded man. He was beset by a widow to afford her redress for a wrong. The poor woman had no money with which to bribe, no rank, no influence, no eloquence even. She had nothing but persistence, but that won out for her! The judge could not stand the annoyance of her unceasing importunity, and he surrendered. "Because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest she wear me out by her continual coming." Many a man has been nagged into doing that which he was reluctant to do.

Now think of making use of such laughable instances to encourage perseverance in prayer! And yet how

forcibly they do! One might well give up trying to soften the heart of a selfish neighbor, but there is every inducement to keep on with one's petitions to God, who is so sympathetic and pitiful. If one can succeed by pertinacity with a selfish friend, how sure we should be that when we present our needs to God we have but to ask, and it shall be given; to seek, and we shall find; to knock, and it shall be opened! The same reasoning applies to the unrighteous judge, only still more forcibly, for he was harder to move than the neighbor. He did not wish to avenge the widow, but did, lest she should make life intolerable for him. On the other hand, God is sensitive to the wrongs of his elect, and his ears are ever open to their cries. If a friendless widow can succeed with a pitiless judge, with how much more assurance can those who are cruelly oppressed or are unjustly treated look to God for redress? Thus this parable, like its mate, serves as a springboard from which one can leap to a higher faith.

Let us not forget the humor with which Jesus sketches the Pharisee in the parable of *The Pharisee and the Publican* (Luke 18:10-14). "The Pharisee stood"—apparently well forward, where he could be noted of men, after the Pharisee usage. "And prayed thus with himself"—not to God, for he asked for nothing; his prayer was merely a self-congratulation. He did express his gratitude after this fashion: "God, I thank thee that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." He divided the world into two classes—himself and the rest of mankind! In his own estimation

he was by eminence *the* saint. The presence of this publican gave him a special satisfaction with himself. He called the attention of God to this tax-collector as a specimen of awful depravity which brought more clearly forward into light his own unexampled goodness.

The publican absolutely reverses the picture, and here all humor disappears. He stands "afar off"—where he will attract no notice. Overcome with a sense of his own unworthiness, he "would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven, but smote his breast, saying, God, be thou merciful to me a sinner." The margin in the Revision has it "the sinner," thus placing in contrast the proud, self-termed exceptional saint with the humble, self-accused exceeding sinner. And to the comfort and joy of all humble souls Jesus said of this publican, "This man went down to his house justified rather than the other."

Space forbids the mention of other instances of Jesus' wit and humor

though the list is not exhausted. It is marvelous how many consider the Bible as a dry-as-dust book, and yawn at the very idea of reading it! Of course they read it but casually, and do not at all comprehend it. The fact is that it is so varied in its contents that it has in it that which will fit in with every mood. It is not filled with tiresome platitudes concerning evil and good. It has in it tragedy and comedy, thrilling heroism and pitiable weakness, war and peace, love and hate, friendship and enmity, logic and wit, the finest of prose and poetry, history and biography, prophecy and fulfilment, inspiring examples of constancy to God and truth and repulsive instances of betrayal and treachery—in short it is thoroughly human, but shot through with divine inspiration, so that one sees everything with the significance it has in the eyes of God. Such a book dull! It can be dull only to those who are really unacquainted with it.